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ABSTRACT

Experience America is a training program for Thomas Jefferson Fellows and Associates (TJFs) that seeks to build lasting links between the Americas by increasing foreign college student participants' understanding of U.S. society and culture and by providing opportunities for them to present information about their countries to North Americans. The training program incorporates clearly defined goals; concrete, measurable objectives; individually tailored experiences; incentives for participation; broad applicability; and cost-effective programming. This manual presents guidelines for the implementation of Experience America. The manual addresses eight topical areas explored in the training program: (1) family/housing, (2) campus life, (3) educational systems, (4) personal/professional development, (5) community life, (6) physical/cultural environment, (7) U.S. decision making, and (8) friendship ambassadors. For each topical area, an objective and suggested activities are listed. The manual also includes comments on budget and staffing for participating training institutions, suggestions for working with TJFs, a form for TJFs to report their experiences, and a model calendar illustrating ways in which activities can be programmed. (JDD)

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Center for Intercultural Education and Development
Georgetown University

Experience America

A guide to enhancing the process of living and learning in the United States for Jefferson Fellows and Associates with the U.S. Agency for International Development

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Edited by Dennis Huffman

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Center for Intercultural Education and Development (CIED) takes great pride in being an innovator in Experience America, creating quality training programs which recognize the breadth of experiences gained by Thomas Jefferson Fellows and Associates (TJFs) while living in the United States and formally incorporating those experiences into participant training. Experience America seeks to build lasting links between the Americas by increasing TJFs' understanding of U.S. society and culture and by providing opportunities for them to present information about their countries to North Americans. Fellows and Associates are challenged to engage in the greater issues that face all people, while also appreciating specific issues that strike closer to home and affect individuals. Experience America is an active process throughout the training period which recognizes that the ultimate goal of USAID international training programs, individual empowerment for the benefit of society, will be attained only through the life-long work of the participants in their home countries.

CIED and its network of participating educational institutions have been guiding AID participants' experiences of the U.S. since 1985. In 1990, CIED developed an Experience America Manual for use by college staff working directly with participants nationwide. The purpose of the manual is to provide these local "guides" with "compasses" to enable participants in training programs across the U.S. to arrive together at the same place even if by very different paths.

CIED believes that the Experience America Manual makes meaningful breakthroughs in many areas. The most significant of these are outlined below.

1. **Clearly defined goals.** Jefferson Fellows and Associates explore the U.S. within eight topical areas which encompass the breadth of possible experiences while providing a clear structure for learning:

    - o Family/Housing
    - o Campus Life
    - o Educational Systems
    - o Personal/Professional Development
    - o Community Life
    - o Physical/Cultural Environment
    - o U.S. Decision Making
    - o Friendship Ambassador

2. **Concrete, measurable objectives.** Jefferson Fellows and Associates know what is expected of them, and they report and analyze their experiences in writing. Feedback and evaluation are provided by both CIED and cooperating training institution staff.

3. **Individually tailored experiences.** Jefferson Fellows and Associates are empowered to define their own explorations of the U.S.

4. **Incentives for participation.** Jefferson Fellows and Associates successfully meeting the Experience America objectives of their training program receive certificates from Georgetown University/CIED.

5. **Broad applicability.** This approach to Experience America can be implemented nationwide by any training institution and in any field of study.

6. **Cost-effective programming.** Nearly every activity suggested in the Manual can be achieved without leaving the host community.

Section II of this manual presents guidelines for the implementation of Experience America. These include some brief comments on budget and staffing for participating training institutions, as well as some specific suggestions for working with Jefferson Fellows and Associates in this area. The form on which Fellows and Associates report their experiences is presented here, along with a model calendar illustrating ways in which activities can be programmed. While the Experience America Manual was originally designed for implementation in two-year associate degree programs, this approach enables CIED and cooperating training institutions to tailor unique programs to fit both long- and short-term training. The model calendar covers two years on a monthly basis, but may be adapted or condensed to fit a weekly or even daily agenda.

We look forward to learning of your experiences with this new approach to Experience America.

Linda Gentes, University of Wisconsin Center - Richland
Betty Herzog, Waukesha County Technical College
Dennis Huffman, CIED/Georgetown University
Alberto Miller, Broome Community College
Dale Vogt, Mt. Hood Community College

II. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Scope

The approach to Experience America outlined in this manual recognizes that each campus and community is unique. Thus, virtually every aspect of the manual is open to interpretation and adaptation to fit the particular environment in which the students find themselves. At the same time, without certain uniform procedures the program will not be able to function.

This manual divides Experience America into eight topical areas: Family/Housing, Campus Life, Educational System, Personal/Professional Development, Community Life, Physical/Cultural Environment, U.S. Decision Making, and Friendship Ambassador. The goal of Experience America is to provide students with the opportunity to explore each of these areas in some depth. The mechanism for ensuring that this occurs is the Project Description Form, on which students document their experiences. Participants are expected to complete a predetermined number of projects in each topical area, based on program objectives and duration. For example, a two-year program would typically entail completion of at least sixteen Experience America projects, two in each area.

B. Student Incentives

Recognizing that most Jefferson Fellows and Associates put the bulk of their energy into their formal training in the field of study, CIED has developed incentives for completion of projects. Fellows and Associates who meet the minimum requirements in Experience America receive an Experience America Certificate from Georgetown University/CIED. In addition, copies of all forms are kept on file at Georgetown, and outstanding project ideas are cited and credited to the authors in program publications. During site visits, CIED program staff discuss progress toward the Experience America certificate with each student.

C. The Role of Local Program Coordinators

While ultimate responsibility for monitoring Experience America activities rests with the CIED program staff, it remains the responsibility of training institution staff to facilitate, guide, and encourage the experiences and active participation of Fellows and Associates in this vital aspect of their training programs.

In developing their own Experience America plans, local program coordinators should seek every opportunity to integrate existing programs and resources. CIED places great importance on the development of "whole school support" for international

programming on campuses. Implementation of Experience America is greatly enhanced where training institutions take a team approach to programming, as opposed to compartmentalizing it as one "component" of the program. ESL instructors, for example, inevitably teach culture as well as language, and involving those instructors in planning for Experience America not only saves local program coordinators time and energy but also greatly enhances the Jefferson Fellows and Associates' experiences. The same is true of other instructors. All faculty related to the program should be thoroughly briefed on the goals of Experience America and encouraged to build those goals into their syllabi.

CIED also encourages the formation of local Community Advisory Boards as a tool for enhancing Experience America. These local citizens ideally come from a wide range of sectors--clergy, government, medical providers, civic organizations, labor, and business and industry. The Community Advisory Boards assist in virtually every aspect of programming, from identifying host families to providing internship placements. Creating a sense of community ownership of Experience America programs is central not only to broadening the range of experiences available to the Jefferson Fellows and Associates but also to helping them feel welcome and comfortable in their new homes, and thus enhancing their ability to learn.

Experience America is an integral part of the orientation which Jefferson Fellows and Associates receive in their home countries prior to departure for the U.S. As part of this orientation, CIED provides each Jefferson Fellow with an Experience America workbook (see page 13) tailored to the particular program and translated into his/her native language. These workbooks include a supply of Experience America Project Description forms, as well as part III of this manual, spelling out the objectives of each of the eight areas of Experience America and providing some sample lists of possible activities and projects. If program start-up time allows, training institutions area encouraged to submit their own lists of activities and projects tailored to the specific focus of the program and the resources of the local community.

D. Specific Suggestions

The success of Experience America hinges on the quality of communication between Jefferson Fellows and Associates and local program coordinators. The form of this communication varies from program to program, but we strongly recommend that specific blocks of time be built into the training calendar of each program from the beginning. Some long-term CIED training programs have built special classes in leadership or U.S. culture into the actual curricula, with the program coordinator as the instructor. This eases scheduling problems by ensuring that all of the participants are able to attend. Many local program coordinators have found that weekly meetings with the students are necessary in order for the program to function

effectively. The subjects of these meetings range from day-to-day logistics, to specific topics in the existing Experience America programs. We suggest that these weekly meetings be formalized on all campuses, and that two sessions each month be used to cover Experience America topics through seminars, field trips, or special events. While weekly meetings might pose some scheduling difficulties, there is almost always at least one hour each week in which all of the students are free, even after they are mainstreamed. Some colleges have chosen to enroll the students in a one-credit Experience America class each semester as a way of solving scheduling problems and ensuring attendance. If nothing else, coordinators can introduce the fine U.S. tradition of the brown bag lunch!

In the beginning, local program coordinators are expected to take full responsibility for planning activities. However, Jefferson Fellows and Associates quickly reach the stage at which they are ready and, particularly with long-term programs, demanding to take a more direct role in planning their experiences. This shift not only meets program goals by empowering the students but also makes the local program coordinator's job somewhat easier. Jefferson Fellows and Associates should be encouraged to form their own Experience America committees, and local program coordinators may even wish to consider setting up eight separate committees, one for each topical area of Experience America. Another strategy which has been successful on some campuses is to turn over responsibility for arranging and conducting formal meetings to the group. The above suggestions serve not only to encourage the full participation of the group but also directly meet objectives in the area of Personal/Professional Development though providing opportunities for experimentation with group dynamics and parliamentary procedure.

From CIED's perspective, individual Jefferson Fellows and Associates can work on Experience America projects in any topic at any time. Local program coordinators, however, may wish to develop their own systems, for example, one which would require students to choose from the topic presented at a particular session. Another possibility would be to implement a process through which the Jefferson Fellows and Associates must declare their topics in advance to provide an opportunity for local program coordinators to guide their thinking.

In some cases, it may be appropriate for Jefferson Fellows and Associates to work together on a project. It is also possible that they will become involved in projects which overlap in terms of the Experience America topics so that they might develop several project description papers from the same experience. By the same token, Jefferson Fellows and Associates should be encouraged to apply work done in other classes toward the Experience America requirements. If a paper written in a government or sociology class relates to the goals of Experience America, there is no reason why all or part of that paper could not also be submitted. Given the pressures under which TJFs are working, killing "two birds with one stone" should be encouraged wherever possible.

Program coordinators should encourage the involvement other faculty members. ESL teachers, Communication teachers, History teachers -- anyone who is working with the students' writing -- can and should be a part of this process. Give the teachers a copy of the workbook and ask them if they see any overlap between their objectives and ours. For example, composition teachers work with essay forms such as "comparison/contrast," "cause/effect," and "physical description," each of which lends itself readily to the kind of work we would like to see from the students.

Finally, a word about budgeting for Experience America. There has been a tendency in the implementation of Experience America to assume that bigger (and farther away) is better. CIED believes that such a vision of Experience America is not only costly but also largely ineffective. This manual stresses locally obtainable objectives because they are free or inexpensive and because they provide depth and the opportunity for long-term continuity.

In addition to working under tight budgets, local program coordinators must keep in mind the guidelines for allowable costs under U.S. Government programs, as well as the impact which certain types of activities might have on the tax liability of TJFs. Any activity which is provided to TJFs under the training program must have a clear <u>educational</u> purpose, and training institutions must be able to document the training objectives of that activity. While clearly delineating and separating recreation from education when conducting cultural activities with foreign students may strike international educators as arbitrary, it is nonetheless essential if TJFs are to avoid tax liability as the beneficiaries of recreational (read "noneducational") activities.

E. A Model Two-year Calendar

As mentioned previously, this sample calendar presents one possible way to distribute the eight topical areas of Experience America over a two-year period. If local program coordinators focus on two topics each month, Jefferson Fellows and Associates will be formally exposed to each topic six times during the program. By moving from observation to participation, the activities suggested in this calendar give consideration to the linguistic barriers which most Jefferson Fellows and Associates encounter. The calendar can be adapted to meet the objectives of both long- and short-term programs.

TWO-YEAR MODEL EXPERIENCE AMERICA CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

Family/Housing
Hold a workshop on U.S. family life/roles, etc.
Community Life
Arrange a welcoming reception by the local council of churches.

OCTOBER

Campus Life
Host a reception for North American students.
Physical/Cultural Environment
Organize a map reading workshop focusing on the local community and the state. Have a "scavenger hunt" activity to test skills.

NOVEMBER

Family/Housing
Arrange a workshop on family communication & dialogue, role-playing good and bad communication.
Friendship Ambassador
Organize a "speakers bureau" to arrange for the group to give presentations to organizations in the community.

DECEMBER

Community Life
Arrange a workshop on the local health care system.
Personal/Professional Development
Invite a counselor to speak to the group on stress and time management and/or goal setting.

JANUARY

Educational System
Provide an overview of the registration process and academic policies.
U.S. Decision Making
With ESL instructor, arrange a seminar on the Bill of Rights.

FEBRUARY

Family/Housing
Invite a speaker to discuss aspects of renting an apartment locally.
Friendship Ambassador
Visit a class on campus and discuss an aspect of your country relevant to the topic of the class (e.g., health care with nursing students).

MARCH

Educational System
Provide an overview of campus administration (board, funding, structure, who's who).
U.S. Decision Making
Visit the State Capital, including legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

APRIL

Campus Life
Orient students on how to get help: learning center, library usage, tutors, counseling services.
Friendship Ambassador
Arrange to have a booth or float at a local festival or parade.

MAY

Family/Housing
Discuss the economics of independent living: shopping, cooking, utilities, budget.
Community Life
Invite a guest speaker to discuss volunteering or have students visit the local center for voluntary action.

JUNE

Educational System
Have a guest speaker discuss local issues and programs such as Head Start and adult literacy.
U.S. Decision Making
Invite a guest speaker from organized labor to address the role of labor in politics.

JULY

Physical/Cultural Environment
Attend an on-site flora/fauna lecture at a local, state, or national park.
Personal/Professional Development
Organize a seminar on sexuality and sex roles.

AUGUST

U.S. Decision Making
Invite a local newspaper editor to speak about freedom of the press.
Physical/Cultural Environment
Attend an on-site lecture at a local or regional museum.

SEPTEMBER

Campus Life
Invite the student activities director to discuss campus clubs, coming events, etc.
Friendship Ambassador
Organize a celebration for your country's Independence Day.

OCTOBER

Community Life
Attend an on-site lecture at the local police department.
U.S. Decision Making
Invite a political lobbyist to speak.

NOVEMBER

Educational System
Attend a public school board meeting or PTA meeting.
Personal/Professional Development
Invite a speaker to train the group in parliamentary procedure and planning meetings.

DECEMBER

Family/Housing
Organize an on-site lecture at local homeless shelter.
Campus Life
Host an international Christmas party for students and staff.

JANUARY

Community Life
Hold a seminar on affirmative action issues in the community.
Personal/Professional Development
Invite a speaker to train the group in proposal writing.

FEBRUARY

Educational System
Arrange a tour of a neighboring educational institution.
Physical/Cultural Environment
Organize an on-site lecture at major local industrial park.

MARCH

Campus Life
Organize public forum on student life in your country.
Physical/Cultural Environment
Invite a speaker from the local recycling coalition or environmental movement.

APRIL

Family/Housing
Arrange for on-site lectures at local welfare and public housing offices.
Friendship Ambassador
Host an international awareness day on campus.

MAY

Personal/Professional Development
Organize a resume writing seminar.
Educational System
Hold a seminar on continuing education and training in your field of study -- journals, conferences, how to stay current.

JUNE

Community Life
Arrange for an on-site lecture about the role played by the local chamber of commerce in the community.
U.S. Decision Making
Invite a representative from the local chamber of commerce or business community to speak on the role of free enterprise in a democracy.

JULY

Physical/Cultural Environment
Arrange a panel of speakers for a forum on ethnic diversity in the local community.
Personal/Professional Development
Organize a job interview workshop.

AUGUST

Friendship Ambassador
Prepare a workshop on culture, culture shock, and cross-cultural communication to be given to North American students or the community.
Campus Life
Hold a seminar on the role of the college alumni association; how to join and maintain contact.

F. Evaluation and Reporting

The Experience America Project Description Form on the following pages serves as the primary means of evaluating the performance Jefferson Fellows and Associates in this area. CIED staff at Georgetown University review the completed forms and maintain a file for each student's work. Those individuals who have completed sixteen forms are awarded a certificate upon returning to their countries.

It is important to note, however, that college staff, because of their immediate access to the students, are in a much better position to have an effect on students' thinking and writing than is the CIED staff. The students put a lot of themselves into these reports, and they deserve immediate feedback. It is for this reason that CIED expects program staff at the college to review and sign the Experience America Project Description Forms.

College staff should view the Experience America Project Description form as a tool for developing and strengthening the students' critical thinking skills -- an area which must be addressed if the program is truly to facilitate the students' personal and professional development.

Originally, the Project Description Form presented the students with a series of leading questions in an effort to guide their thinking as they wrote. Feedback from the students, however, indicated that those questions were limiting their writing rather than helping. The current form eliminates the questions in favor of some expanded instructions and more space to write. The students, however, are going to need some help in organizing their thoughts; they will need someone with whom they can talk through their experiences; they will need an interested and informed reader who can provide immediate feedback.

It is critically important not to put the students off by covering their papers with red ink and negative comments. This is not a job for grammar guru's and punctuation police. Program coordinators will have better luck using comments like: "I'm not sure I understand this part," or "How did you feel when that happened?" or "What would happen if someone did that in your country?" or "What did you learn from this?" or, simply, "Why?" It will be particularly important to be affirming with the first few submissions, as all of this will be quite new to the students.

Finally, TJFs should be encouraged to keep copies of their work, as CIED will not return the forms. Ideally, the collected Project Description Forms will serve as a sort of journal documenting the students' experiences for later reflection and growth. Personal growth is, after all, the goal.

Experience America Project Description Form

Name: _____ Country: _____

Arrival Date: _____ Training Institution: _____

Field of Study: _____ Form #___ of 16

Type of experience (**check only one**):

___ Family/Housing ___ Campus Life

___ Educational System ___ U.S. Decision Making

___ Personal/Professional Development ___ Community Life

___ Physical/Cultural Environment ___ Friendship Ambassador

*Please write about an experience which has been meaningful to you. A good description will probably require at least three paragraphs. You should: **1)** Introduce your topic, **2)** develop your ideas, and **3)** draw some conclusions or note some questions for further investigation. We are interested in what you are learning about the United States, and we want you to be as specific as possible. For example, saying, "I like my host family," is not specific; "My host family eats frozen dinners every night," is specific. Using this example, you should discuss why the family eats frozen dinners, what your family eats in your country, who cooks, and how you feel about this aspect of U.S. culture.*

When you have finished, sign the form and give it to your coordinator, who will review it and suggest changes if necessary. The approved form will then be forwarded to Georgetown.

Signed	Date	Reviewed	Date

III. EXPERIENCE AMERICA

A. Family/Housing

1. Objective

Jefferson Fellows and Associates successfully completing the Family/Housing component of Experience America will have participated actively in the daily lives of their host families during the minimum six-month home stay. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of family life in the United States by contrasting it with family life in their native countries or describing how their experience met or did not meet their expectations. In addition, Jefferson Fellows and Associates will develop a working knowledge of family and housing related issues in the U.S. through personal experience in independent living or through structured exploration of these topics.

2. Possible Topics and Activities

During the first six months:

- Share in the daily routine life of the family, including household responsibilities and chores.
- Become familiar with the daily schedules of family members.
- Develop the habit of dialoguing regularly and openly with family members to maintain open communication.
- Visit the work place of host family members.
- Participate in family traditions such as weddings, baptisms, anniversaries, and holiday celebrations.
- Get to know neighbors and friends of host family.
- Attend meetings/events of organizations to which the family belongs (e.g., church or clubs).
- Visit the school of host family children.
- Attend sports events or school activities with the children in the family.
- Begin correspondence between the host family and the Jefferson Fellow or

Associate's family.

- Learn the cultural background of the host family. Create a family tree.
- Try to understand the financial situation of the host family.
- Compare/contrast family structure and life in the U.S. with that in the Jefferson Fellow's native country.

Throughout the two-year program:

- Maintain frequent contact with the host family.
- Visit a day care center.
- Volunteer with the elderly; adopt a person in a nursing home.
- Volunteer with the handicapped.
- Volunteer with a Big Brother/Sister program.
- Attend a hearing or divorce court.
- Interview a single parent.
- Interview a staff member of the local welfare office, AFDC, etc.
- Volunteer at a homeless shelter or food bank.
- Invite a real estate agent to discuss purchasing a home.
- Visit a home show. Visit different styles of homes.
- Visit or invite an apartment manager to discuss aspects of apartments and renting.

If living independently:

- Invite fire department to discuss safety.
- Invite a carpenter or architect to discuss energy-saving ideas.

- Read and know the rental contract.
- Set up a recycling project.
- Create a monthly budget, clip out and use coupons, and set a day to pay bills.
- Find a way to be a friendly neighbor.
- Set up a schedule for keeping the living area clean.
- Invite a speaker to discuss nutrition, cooking, and shopping for inexpensive food.
- Learn about and take advantage of yard sales and second-hand stores.
- Invite an expert in energy efficiency to discuss ways to conserve energy and save money.

B. Campus Life

1. Objective

Jefferson Fellows and Associates successfully completing the Campus Life component of Experience America will have actively participated in the daily life and special events of the campus community, building relationships with staff and students through involvement with both individuals and organizations.

2. Possible Topics and Activities

- Join clubs on campus.
- Get involved in student government.
- Get involved in social activities on campus such as dances, picnics, special events, etc.
- Prepare displays or special presentations related to your home country.
- Participate in and/or attend sports activities.
- Write articles for student publications.
- Teach your native language; set up a language exchange program such as special language tables in the cafeteria or a tutoring program.
- Give a presentation at or visit foreign language classes.
- Arrange informational exchanges in classes.
- Become familiar with and utilize the resources of the college to meet personal and/or academic needs, e.g., Counseling Center, Library, Learning Center.
- Participate in your student mentoring or student ambassador program.
- Attend workshops on campus.
- Have lunch or dinner with North American students.
- Invite North American students to international student parties.
- Work on student activities committees.

- Introduce yourself to and interview North American students.
- Share and teach your folk dances or your favorite ethnic recipe with North American students.
- Decide on an outing with a North American student.
- Form a discussion group with North American and international students.
- Join student choir or dance group.
- Investigate the role of the college alumni association.

C. Educational Systems

1. Objective

Jefferson Fellows and Associates successfully completing the Educational Systems component of Experience America will be able to describe the types of local educational institutions at the elementary, secondary, and college levels and how they compare with institutions in their home countries. In addition, they will be familiar with and able to utilize the resources available to them on campus.

2. Possible Topics and Activities

- Assume responsibility for college registration and purchase of texts and supplies.
- Become familiar with the academic policies of the college and compare them to those in your country.
- Build habits of communication with instructors. Examine the roles and behavior of students and instructors in the classroom.
- Interview members of the campus administration to learn who they are and what their roles are.
- Attend a college board meeting. Learn about how decisions are made and how programs are funded.
- Become familiar with the U.S. system of higher education. Visit a neighboring private college, state university, or other training institution.
- Attend a local public school board meeting. Learn about how decisions are made and how programs are funded.
- Attend a local PTA meeting.
- Visit local public schools, including vocational high schools.
- Give a presentation on the educational system in your country.

D. Personal and Professional Development

1. Objective

Jefferson Fellows and Associates successfully completing the Personal and Professional Development component of Experience America will demonstrate growth in their ability to set personal goals, manage time, and study effectively. They will also have participated in workshops in topics such as conflict resolution, leadership styles, and parliamentary procedure. Finally, they will participate in workshops on cultural reintegration and job search skills resulting in the assembly of a personal credentials file.

2. Possible Topics and Activities

- o Participate in group activities on time management.
- o Set realistic goals for the period of time in the U.S. and for the future. Regularly review those goals.
- o Invite a counselor to speak to your group on stress management and conflict resolution.
- o Set up a short-term study skills class.
- o Organize a seminar on sexuality and sex roles.
- o Interview a woman manager.
- o Join a professional organization in your field.
- o Network with people in the U.S. in your field.
- o Arrange a day of "job shadowing" with a local person in your field of study.
- o Recognize people's generosity by writing thank you notes and letters.
- o Invite a speaker to train the group in parliamentary procedure.
- o Invite a speaker to train the group in planning meetings.
- o Rotate the leadership of weekly group meetings.
- o Invite a speaker to discuss community organizing.

- Arrange a workshop on proposal writing.
- Meet with the international programs advisory board at your college to discuss the role of advisory boards in general and how this board might be useful to you.
- Invite a speaker to address the role of volunteerism in U.S. society and how volunteerism enhances personal and professional development.
- Plan and participate in organized group activities.
- Plan and participate in a local leadership conference.
- Organize a retreat day for your group.
- Set up a regional leadership conference with other international students.
- Develop a manual for future Jefferson Fellows and Associates.
- Network with and prepare to join the alumni association in your country.
- Plan and take part in re-entry activities.
- Organize a resume writing seminar.
- Organize a job interview workshop.
- Plan a memento from your group to the college.

E. Community Life

1. Objective

Jefferson Fellows and Associates successfully completing the Community Life component of Experience America will be able to describe in general terms how local communities in the U.S. function and organize themselves to solve their problems. Special emphasis is given to community organizations which reflect the values of the local society. In addition, Jefferson Fellows and Associates will develop an appreciation for the religious, ethnic, and economic diversity of the local community.

2. Possible Topics and Activities

- Learn about the role played by the local chamber of commerce in the community.
- Interview a local small business owner about how he or she got started.
- Interview a local banker about credit and starting a small business.
- Visit local civic clubs (Lions, Rotary) to find out about their function in the community.
- Visit the local center for voluntary action which can match the skills and talents of Jefferson Fellows and Associates with the needs of the community.
- Attend an Affirmative Action Committee meeting.
- Attend the county fair.
- Attend town or city meetings.
- Visit the local police department.
- Visit a local volunteer fire department.
- Get involved with a local church youth group or other project of the church.
- Attend a meeting of the local council of churches.
- Get involved with the YMCA, Scouts, 4-H, or other youth clubs.
- Participate in or attend local sports events.

- Attend local festivals and community events.
- "Adopt" someone at a nursing home.
- Attend a special event sponsored by an ethnic group in the community.
- Learn about the local health system. Volunteer at the local hospital or clinic.
- Visit Head Start programs.
- Get involved with the local blood drive.
- Help out with local fund raising efforts such as a walk-a-thon or car wash.
- Learn about how the community provides for the needs of special populations such as the elderly, the very young, handicapped people, the homeless, people with addictions, or recent immigrants.
- Write an article for the local newspaper.
- Visit the local broadcast and print media.

F. Physical/Cultural Environment

1. Objective

Jefferson Fellows and Associates successfully completing the Physical/Cultural Environment component of Experience America will be familiar with the history, geography, and ethnic composition of the local community, and the impact which those factors have had on the development and cultural life of the region.

2. Possible Topics and Activities

- o Attend on site lectures at local and regional museums.
- o Participate in local outdoor festivals (maple, strawberry, etc.).
- o Take advantage of on-site flora/fauna lectures at parks.
- o Visit natural and historical landmarks.
- o Acquire and demonstrate map knowledge of the U.S. and the local area.
- o Organize on-site lectures at major industries.
- o Interact with Native American groups.
- o Explore issues related to ethnic diversity in the local community.
- o Research a local cultural or historical figure.
- o Invite a speaker from the local recycling coalition or environmental movement to discuss local environmental issues.
- o Give a presentation on the geography, history, or culture of your country.
- o Attend a concert by a local folk musician.
- o Participate in an activity that deals with the preservation of the earth.

G. U.S. Decision Making

1. Objective

Jefferson Fellows and Associates successfully completing the U.S. Decision Making component of Experience America will have an appreciation for how individuals and institutions act and organize to effect change in their host community. Participants will be able to contrast the decentralized nature of the U.S. system of government with those of their own countries.

2. Possible Topics and Activities

- o Interview a local politician.
- o Attend a town meeting.
- o Visit a local courtroom and interview the judge.
- o Follow a local political issue by interviewing people on both sides and monitoring the path toward resolution.
- o Volunteer with the League of Women Voters to help with elections.
- o Visit the state capital -- legislature, executive, and judicial.
- o Arrange a seminar on the Bill of Rights.
- o Have a party to watch election returns.
- o Attend meetings of local grassroots organizations which are working on issues of local, state, or national importance (environment, abortion, Central America, zoning, etc.).
- o Visit the local headquarters of a political party.
- o Visit the local congressperson's office.
- o Interview a local political reporter.
- o Invite a newspaper editor to speak about censorship and freedom of the press.
- o Collect articles from various sources about a particular issue.

- Monitor print and broadcast coverage of your home country over a period of time to see how well informed U.S. voters are on international issues.

- Invite someone from a local labor union to speak about the role of labor in politics.

- Interview a local veteran.

- Invite a political lobbyist to speak about his or her role in influencing public policy.

- Attend a march, demonstration or rally (learn about applying for a permit, civil disobedience, etc.).

- Interview a tax accountant.

- Interview a school board member.

- Develop a flow chart of elected officials and political appointees in your community.

- Invite a representative from the chamber of commerce or business community to speak on the role of free enterprise in a democracy.

H. Friendship Ambassador

1. Objective

Jefferson Fellows and Associates successfully completing the Friendship Ambassador component of Experience America will have actively contributed to a broader understanding and appreciation for the unique history, culture, art, and natural beauty of their home countries through formal presentations and the building of long-term interpersonal relationships.

2. Possible Topics and Activities

- Host an international day on campus.
- Visit a class on campus and explain an aspect of your country relevant to the topic of the class.
- Prepare a spot for radio or TV about your program. Write an article for a local publication about the program or about your country.
- Prepare a workshop on culture, culture shock, and cross-cultural communication to be given to North American students or the community.
- Arrange to have a Jefferson Fellow booth or float at a local festival or parade.
- Set up special "language tables" in the cafeteria at which only Spanish or French are spoken so that North American students can practice the languages they are studying with CASS students.
- Share and teach folk dances and songs from your country with the community.
- Visit classes at local public schools to talk about your country. Foreign language, geography and history classes might be especially appropriate.
- Organize an Independence Day celebration for your country.
- Arrange a pen pal network between high school students in the host community and in your home community.
- Link a church in the host community with a church in your home community.
- Organize a speakers bureau to arrange for Jefferson Fellows and Associates to give presentations about their countries in the community.